

Agency Information

AGENCY : FBI
RECORD NUMBER : 124-90143-10129

RECORD SERIES : HQ

AGENCY FILE NUMBER : 100-370750-NR

Released under the John
F. Kennedy
Assassination Records
Collection Act of 1992
(44 USC 2107 Note).
Case#:NW 54460 Date:
10-04-2017

Document Information

ORIGINATOR : FBI
FROM : LA
TO : HQ

TITLE :

DATE : 10/18/1941
PAGES : 19

SUBJECTS :

HERBERT BIBERMAN
JOHN HOWARD LAWSON

DOCUMENT TYPE : PAPER, TEXTUAL DOCUMENT
CLASSIFICATION : Confidential
RESTRICTIONS : 1B; 4
CURRENT STATUS : Redact
DATE OF LAST REVIEW : 10/09/1998

OPENING CRITERIA : INDEFINITE

COMMENTS : RPT

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

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File No. 100-6769

Origin: LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Report made at:

Date

Period

Report made by:

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

10-18-41

10/11-18/41

THOMAS E. MYERS GWS

Title:

Character of case:

HERBERT BIBERMAN;
JOHN HOWARD LAWSON

INTERNAL SECURITY (R)

Classification by 9145 JPA 6/10/41

Declassify on: DATED 5-4-76

6/10/87 SP.6bya/Hay #259416

SYNOPSIS:

EDWARD C. CARTER left Los Angeles Oct. 12, 1941

en route San Francisco, Seattle, and Chicago [u] for further activities bearing on organization local committees

for Russian war relief. Bureau offices in said cities notified and surveillance requested. THOMAS L. HARRIS, National Secretary, AMERICAN COUNCIL ON SOVIET RELATIONS, visited Los Angeles Oct. 3 to Oct. 11, 1941; delivered address Oct. 9, 1941 featuring transcription of broadcast by Women of Moscow and urging support for Soviet Union. HARRIS also conferred with BIBERMAN and LAWSON Oct. 10, 1941 concerning participation of subjects in organization of local unit of A.C.S.R. Plans perfected at conference, disclosed in letter written by HARRIS to ERNEST DAWSON, prominent Los Angeles Communist, indicate subjects, with VIOLA BROTHERS SHORE and JOHN GARFIELD, are to take active part in organizing local unit A.C.S.R. Photographic and photostatic copies HARRIS' document forwarded Bureau and New York. Character of A.C.S.R. as militant C.P. front organization with plans for national development clearly disclosed, and Bureau advised by teletype. Personnel of meeting held at LAWSON'S home Oct. 5, 1941 ascertained; group apparently concerned with activities

[u] LEAGUE OF AMERICAN WRITERS. Additional meeting, held Oct. 16, 1941 at home of LESTER COLE, was attended by BIBERMAN and LAWSON. Questionable status MADELINE RUTHVEN cited. Additional mail covers established. General YAKHONTOFF, under auspices of I.W.O., expected Los Angeles presently for propaganda purposes.

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ORIGINAL FILE

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REFERENCE: Report of Special Agent THOMAS E. MYERS, Los Angeles, California, dated October 11, 1941. Los Angeles teletypes dated October 13 and 15, 1941. *J(S)*

DETAILS: At the close of the last weekly period reflected in reference report, EDWARD C. CARTER was still at Los Angeles and under observation intermittently by Special Agents STANLEY R. RUSSO and the writer. CARTER occupied room 6317 at the Hotel Biltmore, Los Angeles, and was observed checking out of that hotel on October 12, 1941. A lengthy list of telephone numbers for calls made by CARTER during his stay at the Biltmore Hotel was furnished by Assistant Manager CATO of that hotel, and the identities of the subscribers thereto are being secured for inclusion in a subsequent report. CARTER left no forwarding address and went personally to the United Airlines Office immediately adjacent to the Biltmore Hotel, where he made air travel reservations. From Mr. A. C. VOORHIS, Reservations Clerk of the said airline, the following prospective itinerary of CARTER was obtained:

The records disclosed that CARTER was scheduled to travel on Flight 17 leaving San Francisco at 3:15 P.M. on October 14, 1941 for Seattle, due to arrive in Seattle at 8:27 P.M. the same date. He was further booked to leave Seattle via United Airlines on Trip No. 14 for Chicago at 4:15 P.M. on October 15, 1941, and scheduled to arrive at Chicago at 8:32 A.M., October 16, 1941. Inasmuch as CARTER traveled from New York to Los Angeles via this airline, it was assumed that he would make further reservations on the same carrier at Chicago. All of the offices on CARTER'S route were advised by reference teletype of Oct. 13, 1941, which further related CARTER'S status as an organizer for the COMMITTEE FOR MEDICAL AID TO RUSSIA. It was requested therein that the Bureau Offices in question place CARTER under appropriate discreet surveillance in order that all possible information might be developed concerning his contacts, activities, and developments resultant therefrom in each of the named cities.

Confidential National Defense Informant Los Angeles No. 1100 indicated that due to subject BIBERMAN'S illness, he did not accompany CARTER to the plane and did not see him personally after October 9, 1941. JANE MEADE, however, according to the cited informant, took up various matters with CARTER and relayed CARTER'S messages to BIBERMAN. It will be observed hereinafter that BIBERMAN was engaged on October 10, 1941 on another of his projects and apparently did not have time to entertain CARTER at his home. However, JANE MEADE indicated to BIBERMAN that the program of the Russian Aid Committee was thought by CARTER to be progressing satisfactorily and it is apparent that the group felt that CARTER'S visit achieved the results of unity and cohesion in the movement, the lack of which has been previously felt by them, as shown in the writer's reference report. *(R)(u)* *(Q)(u)*

During the current weekly period it has been observed daily

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time a junior partner of MORGAN & COMPANY had been seen at a "red" meeting. It is interesting to note the reference by BIBERMAN to the LAMONT sponsorship of Russian war relief in juxtaposition to his statements regarding the AMERICAN COUNCIL ON SOVIET RELATIONS. It is reasonably obvious that there is a motivating force controlling the resurgence of the two types of propaganda favorable to the Soviet cause and collaterally the education of the American public to the abandonment of prejudice against the Soviet and its form of government. In view of this, the Bureau was advised by reference teletype of [October 15, 1941], in compliance with instructions contained in Bureau letter of August 7, 1941, concerning the activities of the A.C.S.R., as additionally disclosed by documentary evidence mentioned below. (X)(u)

(u) With reference to the conference arranged by CULLEN for HARRIS, BIBERMAN, and LAWSON as above cited, it may be stated that due to the secrecy maintained by the participants, no information could be secured by Confidential National Defense Informant Los Angeles 1100. However, it was ascertained that Rev. THOMAS L. HARRIS was registered at the Mayflower Hotel, 527 South Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, California. His registration card as furnished by Mr. McMEANS, manager, and photostatic copies of which are being placed in the Los Angeles file in this case, reflects that HARRIS, accompanied by his wife, checked into the Hotel on October 3, 1941, and occupied Room 925 until October 11, 1941. While at the hotel, HARRIS made three telephone calls and sent two telegrams. On October 3, 1941, he telephoned Crestview 68340 twice, and it has been ascertained that the subscriber to this number is the European Film Fund, 9172 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, California. Collateral information is being secured concerning this organization to ascertain, if possible, what business relations HARRIS had with the organization.

On October 10, 1941, HARRIS telephoned Sunset 23387, which is an unpublished number subscribed to by JOHN GARFIELD, 4031 Longridge Ave., Van Nuys, California. The status of GARFIELD will be described hereinafter. The telegrams sent by HARRIS were both directed to New York City to addressees whose identities have not yet been ascertained.

The Peoples World, Communist Party newspaper, in its issue of October 10, 1941 carried an article entitled "ANGELENO'S URGE MORE SOVIET AID" which reflected that HARRIS spoke at a rally under the auspices of the American Council on Soviet Relations on October 9, 1941.

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he "did not think they were the right people." It will be noted here that both VIOLA BROTHERS SHORE and SAMUEL ORNITZ have been prominent in the past in connection with Communist front organizations, and further, it is recalled that the pattern of BIBERMAN'S activities as cited in the writer's reference report and the report dated October 4, 1941, calls for the use of persons who have not been prominent in the past in Communist-dominated organizations. (X)(u)

The meeting at LESTER COLE'S house, above described, was discussed by MADELINE RUTHVEN with BIBERMAN along lines which indicated that it was called because she had received a telegram from New York asking for haste and presumably sent by HARRIS' headquarters. Confidential National Defense Informant Los Angeles No. 1100 advised that in the discussion RUTHVEN stated that they must have the names in by the 24th, and the informant suggests the possibility that the names in question are those of local sponsors and workers on the A.C.S.R. project. She stated that "they", obviously meaning the New York headquarters, had "sent some names from New York -- some very good names." According to the cited informant, RUTHVEN further commented on the fact that it would be difficult to get JULIE to attend the meeting because of his present motion picture commitments. Informant 1100 has indicated that JULIE is identical with JOHN GARFIELD. (X)(u)

Reference is made to the fact that HARRIS' letter was addressed to ERNEST DAWSON and further reference is made to the mention therein of VIOLA BROTHERS SHORE and JOHN GARFIELD. It is considered advisable to set out the available information in the files of the Los Angeles Field Division Office reflecting the status of these individuals with relation to the Communist Party. It will be noted that HARRIS himself says that he met DAWSON in the Soviet Union. The fact of DAWSON'S visit to Russia has been of record in the Los Angeles Field Division, which has a case entitled "ERNEST DAWSON; MRS. SADIE ROBERTS DAWSON, with aliases; ESPIONAGE - R," Los Angeles File No. 65-1374. In this case custodial detention memorandums have been submitted on both DAWSON and his wife. The DAWSON'S live at 3003 Vineyard Street, Los Angeles, California, and DAWSON operates a high-class book shop known as DAWSON'S BOOK STORE, located at 627 South Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, California.

DAWSON was a sponsor of the SCHNEIDERMAN-DARCY DEFENSE COMMITTEE, and his wife was treasurer of that committee. DAWSON was also a captain of the 61st Assembly District of the AMERICAN PEACE CRUSADE and has been reported by Confidential National Defense Informant Los Angeles No. 3 as a member of the Communist Party as of January 31, 1939. This informant indicates the present possession and ability to produce documentary evidence of DAWSON'S membership in the Communist Party. In view of the fact that DAWSON appears of interest to this investigation in the light of Rev. HARRIS' letter, it is considered advisable to establish a mail cover on this individual, and same has been requested as of the date of this report.

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League, the school started as a school for writers on Monday, October 13, 1941, and from the circumstance of the group meeting at LAWSON'S, it is concluded that the meeting had reference to the launching of this school. From Confidential National Defense Informant Los Angeles No. 3, there was obtained data indicating that CEDRIC BELFRAGE, PAUL JARRICO, VIOLA BROTHERS SHORE, and JOHN HOWARD LAWSON will be among the instructors in the school for writers. Informant No. 3 advised that he had obtained a brochure announcing the school and its courses, which indicated that VIOLA BROTHERS SHORE would lecture on the composition of short stories, and that JOHN HOWARD LAWSON would conduct a course entitled "History of American Liberty From the Colonial Period to The Present" on Monday evenings throughout the winter.

In view of the character of the lectures to be delivered by LAWSON as indicated by the title of his course, consideration is being given to the registration of a Bureau employee or Confidential Informant in the courses being offered at the Writers' School.

It is noted that the LEAGUE OF AMERICAN WRITERS has received attention as a Communist front organization in the Los Angeles Field Division and full information concerning it is reflected in the case entitled "LEAGUE OF AMERICAN WRITERS; INTERNAL SECURITY - R," Los Angeles File No. 100-5377.

As of the date of the dictation of this report, Confidential National Defense Informant Los Angeles No. 1100 advised that information had been developed concerning General YAKHONTOFF, who, it is noted, is mentioned in the letter written by THOMAS L. HARRIS to ERNEST DAWSON. The cited informant advised that one PHILIP GARDNER contacted subject BIBERMAN and advised him that the I.W.O. was bringing General YAKHONTOFF to Los Angeles on the seventeenth of November, and that YAKHONTOFF would remain until the twenty-third of November. GARDNER stated that YAKHONTOFF is "booked every night," but that he, GARDNER, got in touch with BIBERMAN to offer the services of YAKHONTOFF to BIBERMAN for propaganda use by subject "among the Hollywood crowd." BIBERMAN, in rejoinder, advised GARDNER that possibly the AMERICAN COUNCIL ON SOVIET RELATIONS "might be able to use him," but he stated that YAKHONTOFF would have to be made available in the evening. GARDNER stated that possibly that could be arranged, and it was suggested that some time prior to YAKHONTOFF'S arrival, BIBERMAN get in touch with GARDNER, whose office is Room 336, 257 South Spring Street, Los Angeles, telephone MUTUAL 5468. Informant 1100 further stated that following the discussion concerning YAKHONTOFF'S availability to BIBERMAN if the latter wanted him, GARDNER asked BIBERMAN if the latter would like to be on a program with YAKHONTOFF at a mass meeting to be held at the Embassy Auditorium, Los Angeles, during YAKHONTOFF'S visit. BIBERMAN immediately stated to GARDNER that he expected to be out of town in about three weeks and would remain away from Los Angeles for at least six weeks, and therefore, could not be publicly booked. It will be obvious from knowledge of BIBERMAN'S intention to assume employment in a motion picture studio in (X)(u)